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CONSIDERATIONS

O N

PAROCHIAL EVILS.



[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

PRINTED ON CHILTMAN'S

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(2)

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PAROCHIAL EVILS:

A

L E T T E R

ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS GILBERT, Esq.



L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR LOCKYER DAVIS,

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H O L B O R N .

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L E T T E R

T O

THOMAS GILBERT, Esq.

SIR,

THE establishment of parochial work-houses being the great object of the bill, which you proposed to Parliament this Session, I am sorry that it was totally rejected, and in my opinion for frivolous reasons: such as, the idea of lowering the dignity of Magistrates, the apprehension of vesting Commissioners with absolute power, and the danger of creating a new kind of national debt: reasons these, which ought not to have condemned the bill

A

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in toto, nor influenced the House to reject your proposal of uniting parishes for the better relief and employment of the poor.

From the great increase of the poor through profligacy, idleness, and the luxury of the times, it is now become a question, whether the laws can be properly executed ; or whether a total change of Queen Elizabeth's system is not become necessary. Judge Blackstone observes, " the 43d of Elizabeth is founded on the principle of relieving the impotent ; and the only defect in the plan of the statute was the confining the management of the poor to small parochial districts, which are not capable of furnishing proper work, or providing a proper overseer of them." It therefore now becomes necessary to unite

unite and incorporate a number of parishes as proposed by your bill, and as recommended by Dr. Burn : who asserts, and I believe with great truth, that by uniting ten parishes, nine parts in ten of the squabbles about parish settlements would be saved ; and enumerates many other advantages, which would be derived from such a plan. The poor would, at the same time, be rescued from those mansions of misery, the parish work-houses ; where the saving of expence is the only consideration ; all the other great concerns of humanity, and the bettering of the poor being totally neglected.

But I must beg leave to object to the other part of your bill : by which you intended to add a number of Commissioners and others, to aid and

assist those persons, who are at present entrusted with the execution of the laws ; and who are now able to execute them, if they were not negligent of their duty. For the same indolence and strict attachment to self-interest, would, I fear, under your plan, prevail ; which now obviate the execution of the laws in general : and if every one shall continue to trust to his neighbour, and the whole to government ; the appointment of any number of commissioners can avail but little.

Il est facile de publier une L^oi,
Mais il est difficile d' en assurer l'ex-
ecution.

I shall therefore beg leave to submit some observations to your consideration, upon the conduct of magistrates, over-
seers

seers and constables; to whom the legislature hath entrusted the execution of the laws respecting the poor, and which have frequently occurred to me as a Magistrate, in the course of a long practice.

You will readily allow the object of the poor laws to be the employment of the idle, and the relief of the aged and infirm: and the execution of the said laws is properly committed to certain overseers of the poor, assisted by the Magistrates and constables, to whom the law speaks in plain language; directing them to employ those that can work, and relieve those that cannot: or, in other words,

Pauciores alantur otio,

Reddatur agricolatio,

Ut

Ut sit hoc estum negotium,
 Quo se utiliter exerceat
 Otiosa ipsa turba;
 Vel quos hactenus inopia
 Fures facit, vel qui nunc
 Errones, aut otiosi sunt
 Ministri, fures nimirum
 Utrique futuri.—EUTOPIÆ, lib. i.

And the overseers, being annually appointed at Easter, receive printed directions and orders to provide materials to set the poor to work. But so far are they from obeying the said orders, that the laws are seldom carried into execution; and many overseers are totally ignorant, that they are compelled by law to employ their poor.

And where * work-houses are fixed

* Where the poor are frequently crammed together in such a manner, that they can neither spin, nor perform any kind of labour.

upon

upon for the employment of the poor, every one knows after what manner they are generally managed, and what employment is there found for the idle, and even those who are willing to work: work-houses being commonly fixed upon, only to give a temporary relief to the poor, to save an expence to the parish, and to exempt the overseer from part of his trouble and labour. The basis, therefore, of the system enforced by the legislature, in order to diminish the poor rates, viz. the employment of the poor, being totally neglected by the overseers; what can be expected but an increase of the poor rates, while every one knows that idleness is the root of the evil complained of?

The Constables, whom the law calls to the aid of the Overseer, by ordering them

them to apprehend all vagrants, and to whom a reward is offered for apprehending them, in order that they may be sent to their place of settlement, or legally dealt with as vagabonds, are so far from performing this principal part of their duty; that both Town and Country swarm with beggars and vagrants, who from a habit of idleness come at last to be supported with their wives and families from the poor-rates.

To the Magistrates, indeed, as a superior power, the execution of the poor laws is entrusted, and likewise the direction of the conduct of all officers concerned in executing them: but unless complaint and information be brought before a Magistrate, no cognisance is taken of any neglect in the execution of those laws; and

and to the Magistrates sufficient authority is not entrusted for compelling the Overseers to do their duty. The execution of the poor laws then, being thus entrusted, it will not be difficult to assign the reason why they are not better executed. For to execute the office of a Magistrate in a diligent and punctual manner, so much time, labour, and patience are required, that men of character and property generally shrink from the office; and those only are found to accept it, where the constitution never meant to place it.

The overseer is a substantial householder chosen by the parish, and approved by the magistrates: but the execution of this office being attended with so much care and labour, it seems absurd to suppose that it can be properly executed by

a person, whose whole time and attention must be taken up in his own private concerns, and daily course of business. And men of substance will seldom accept it; tho' substantial householders are the only persons qualified by law to undertake it.

The constable, who is an officer that is compelled to execute the office in rotation with the rest of the Parish, having sufficient employment in his own occupation, never executes any part of his duty as constable; but when particularly called upon by the public: and for neglect of duty, neither overseer, or constable, is ever called to account by the magistrates; unless particular complaint is made against them, which is seldom or never done. The institution therefore

fore of magistrates, overseers, and constables, becomes totally useless; and of which the whole world hath not the like, according to Lord Coke, if it be but duly executed.

This being the general conduct of the officers entrusted with the execution of the laws, I submit, Sir, to your judgment; whether it would not be more prudent to put the execution of the laws into better hands, than they are placed in at present; rather than make any alterations in them: and to recommend this proposal to your consideration, I will beg leave to mention the hands, in which the execution of the laws may be properly placed. The want of a sufficient number of proper persons, to act as justices of the peace, renders some alteration in their appointment necessary; and why

should we not recur to the election of them as conservators of the peace, before their appointment fell into the hands of the crown ? Every one knows in what manner, and by what persons, the commission of the peace is at present filled up. But if the conservators of the peace were chosen, as formerly, by the freeholders of the County ; they would for their own sakes chuse *de probioribus in comitatu suo*, and such as whose characters must be well known by their residence * amongst them.

If such an election of Magistrates should appear to you to be attended with too many difficulties, I can see no rea-

* A worthy Clergyman replied to his patron, who asked him how it came to pass that he had lost his interest with the freeholders of his County : Sir, you have been guilty of that damnable sin of Non residence.

son,

son, why every man of a certain property should not be compelled to act as a Justice of the peace, in rotation with men of the same property in their respective counties, as Overseers and Constables, being substantial house-holders, are compelled to act in their several parishes: and I am convinced, that the legislature would have laid the same obligation upon a man of property, to stand forth in support of the peace and good order of the community, as it has laid upon the Overseer and Constable; if it had not been taken for granted, that such would readily stand forth at all times in support of their property, by keeping the peace, and preserving the order of society.

The Overseers and Constables may be chosen by their parishes as at present,
and

and approved and appointed by the Magistrates in the manner they now are, but not annually. I would have them continued in their offices, *quam diu se bene geferint*; and with a proper salary for the time and labour expended in the execution of their offices. I am aware that, when the Public is so grievously burdened with poor rates and taxes, to propose the giving pay to the Magistrates, Overseers, and Constables, may seem a wanton expence: as their pay would add to the burden already complained of. But as I imagine that the poor rates would be greatly diminished by such appointment, and as the other parishioners would be exempt from serving those offices; the pay allowed to these officers would not then be complained of.

And I cannot think it unreasonable
that

that the Magistrates should be paid and rewarded by the Public, which would reap the benefit of their labour by a reformation of manners in the people, by a restoration of good order in society, and by a diminution of the poor rates.

The Judges, who expound the law, receive ample recompence: why should not the Magistrates * be paid, who execute the law? If 6000l. per annum be given to a Bengal Justice, why may not two or three hundred per annum be give to a Magistrate; whose whole time would be occupied in distributing justice and wholesome advice to every one in

* Two Magistrates in each district or hundred of a County would be a sufficient number: and Q. if members of Parliament were now paid, as they formerly were, whether it would not be for the benefit of the public?

his

his neighbourhood? For as that able historian Mr. Hume observes, there are some callings, which, though useful and necessary in a state, bring no advantage nor pleasure to any individual; and the supreme power is obliged to alter its conduct with regard to the retainers of those professions. It must give them public encouragement, in order to their subsistence; and it must provide against that negligence, to which they will naturally be subject, either by annexing particular honours to the profession, by establishing a long subordination of ranks, and a strict dependance, or some other expedient. Hen. VIII. Chap. 3.

Pay being granted to these different officers, every man will be compelled to do his duty: as the Justices at their Quarter Sessions will then think it incumbent

cumbent on them to call the Overseers and Constables regularly to account for their conduct; and the Court of King's Bench, or the Judges, at their assizes, will also hold it incumbent on them to take cognisance of every neglect of duty in the Magistrates. Whereas at present little or no notice is taken of any default in the conduct of either: but on the contrary, every indulgence is shewn them by the court; as the Magistrates are supposed always to act from disinterested motives.

The Justices, Overseers, and Constables, being thus appointed, and with proper stipends; the following good consequences would arise to the public. The Justice would not then wait for information of the many transgressions of the law: but, as Censor, would inspect the life, manners, and conduct of the people,

C in

in order to prevent them. Instead of licensing houses to the encouragement of idleness and debauchery ; he would put a stop to all those meetings, where idleness, dissipation, and gaming prevail, to the corruption of the morals and manners of the people, and to the destruction of all order in society. He would then look to the relief of the aged and infirm, by having proper houses to receive them ; and to the employment of the young and healthy, by providing proper places where for correction to send them : * in short he would be compelled diligently to perform the duties of his office, and would see that neither Overseers or Constables were guilty of any neglect of their duty, as he would

* In Holland called bettering-houses, but from which houses in England every one comes forth more confirmed in his bad habits than when he was sent there.

be finally answerable for the ill consequences of such neglect. And the people, being trained up in the habits of labour and industry, could never want employment in a Country flourishing in agriculture, manufactures, and commerce ; but, instead of being a burden to their Parishes, would prove to be the support and defence of their country.

Having thus shortly stated the object of the poor laws, the manner in which they are executed, and in what manner I think they may be better executed ; I must still confess the work can not be compleat without the assistance of a very essential part of the community :

Quid leges sine moribus ?

and for that assistance we must look to the body of the clergy. With respect to the Overseers of the clergy or *Episcopoi*, in what manner they ordain or superintend those committed to their care, I shall not investigate. But I will venture to pronounce, that our parishes would be much better supplied than they are, if the livings in public patronage, instead of being presented to by the Chancellor and Bishops, were elective; the election placed in the clergy of the diocese.

Pluralities would by this means become less frequent, residence more regularly complied with, and their parochial duties be more duly performed. Not that these salutary objects can be completed, without an increase of income to the inferior clergy; and whence can that

that arise; but by taking from those who have too * much, and giving to those who have too little, and by consolidation of the many very small livings which at present are not a support for a curate?

In Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and some other counties I could name, it is not uncommon for a curate to supply five or six Churches: some of which are served only alternately, and others so slovenly, that the Parishioners cannot with any degree of convenience attend them. Let us suppose the service of two of the six Churches to be omitted:

* Wo be to the Shepherds of Israel, that feed themselves!

Should not the Shepherds feed the flock?

Ye eat the fat, and ye cloath you with the wool,
Ye kill them that are fat, but ye feed not the flock, &c.

the

the first and last, at which service is performed, have it at hours so unreasonable, that few, very few in those parishes will put themselves to the inconvenience of attending it.

And as to those parishes, where there is no service at all, the people consider themselves discharged for that Sunday from all religious duties; and current is the phrase among them, "Our Parson has given us a holiday to day." And this holiday they never fail to make holiday use of; they will not stir to a neighbouring church, though it should be but half a mile distant, but usually spend the day, set apart for God's honour and service, in jollity and junketing, the women at the tea-table, and the men at the ale house.

To

To see the patronage of the livings now vested in the crown and the prelacy, transferred to general elections, and those elections placed in the beneficed clergy of the respective dioceses, is rather a wish, than a hope. Not so the consolidation of the small livings: which from the following sketch of a plan, I beg leave to submit to you, I wish you may think as practicable, as on the maturest consideration it has always appeared to me: a plan obviating a variety of evils, and producing infinite good: promoting the residence of the parochial clergy, increasing their emoluments, and effecting the regular service of their churches in a decent manner, and at an hour so reasonable as shall render the non-attendance of every one inexcusable.

The

The plan of reformation here intended is briefly this: where three small livings lie contiguous, and triangularly situated; it is proposed, that the three Churches be pulled down, and in their stead one built; as nearly equi-distant as may be from each Parish, and accounted the common Parish Church: and that the three livings be consolidated, and the rights of presentation fixed by commission, according to the respective value of the livings. Where only two Parishes lie thus contiguous and convenient, it is proposed that the two churches be pulled down, and one built exactly between them; the Parishes being consolidated, and the rights of presentation, as in the above case, fixt according to the respective value of the livings.

And in further favour of this design,
we

we may observe an advantage hitherto unnoticed, arising from the late frequent inclosure of corn-fields; as the country is thereby so greatly depopulated, that a Church equal to the least of the three, will generally be sufficient to contain every member of it in the three united Parishes. The surplus therefore of materials from the old Churches, it is apprehended, would almost defray the expence of building new ones. And in defect of this, if the further expences requisite for carrying this scheme into execution, as well as those for the several commissions appointed for the inspecting, directing, and settling the rights of presentation, &c. were furnished from that fund, granted by royal bounty, for the augmentation of small livings; I conceive there could not be a more proper application of it.

D

A decent

A decent provision for the inferior clergy being thus effected, they need have no temporal concerns to call them from the proper functions of their office : but the care of their flock being their only concern, they would be enabled to look carefully after it, without the assistance even of Sunday Schools. For having their duty generally to perform in only one church, it might there be regularly and properly performed, as in Scotland, and Switzerland ; even to the admonishing the old, and catechising the young, after the service is performed : and the directions, given by Bishop Beveridge to the Clergy of his diocese, might be strictly obeyed ; so that few of the flock would go astray from their shepherd in search of fresh pasture.

Sed quis custodiat ipsos custodes ?

To

To this question I shall only say, that in case of any neglect in their conduct, a royal * visitation might take place; such as was formerly recommended and procured by Archbishop Cranmer. And in proof that I deal not in reveries, I beg leave to refer to those better days of the Church, when Wood, Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, was suspended by Archbishop Sandcroft for non residence, † and neglect of duty.

From the good effects produced even

* A Bishop's house is called a palace, as being a proper mansion to receive Majesty.

† No Bishop in France can quit his diocese without the royal permission; and Q. whether the attendance of the Lords Spiritual might not be dispensed with in parliament: except when special matters of spiritual concern were under consideration.

by the appearance of order, decency, and religion, it is evident what good would arise by the residence of the clergy; and, as example will always operate more forcibly than precept, we have good reason to presume the morals and manners of the people would be so corrected and improved; that habits of sobriety and industry would soon take place, to the ease and comfort of every individual person, and to the great diminution of the poor rates. And I may appeal to the experience and observation of every man in those Parishes where the gentry are resident upon their estates, and the clergy upon their livings, whether the morals and manners of the people are not in a better state, than in other places; and whether the poor rates are so high.

From

From the great improvement made in this country since the time of Elizabeth some alterations may be necessary to be made, with respect to granting orders of removal of the poor to their settlements, the giving of certificates, and properly placing out apprentices : and you, Sir, are the best judge in what manner such alterations should be made. And with respect to bastardy, I am sorry to observe the power of the Magistrates is defective ; the Indemnification of the Magistrates to the Parish being the only object of the law : so that the lives of most of the children not born in wedlock are lost ; it being the general practice of Overseers to compound with the father at a trifling sum for the maintenance of the child, by which means it immediately becomes the interest of the Parish, that

it

it should die, and its maintenance be saved.*

But to correct and repress idleness, vagrancy, and drunkennes, the immediate causes of the increase of the poor rates, the Magistrates are at present armed with sufficient power. There are statutes to regulate almost every place of public meeting: yet the Magistrates in the Metropolis have licensed a play-house, in breach of an express statute made to prevent the licensing of such places. There are laws for the suppressing of particular games, and against gaming in general: but those laws are never executed. And there are laws too against swearing, tipling in ale houses,

* I must here lament the decay of the Foundling Hospital.

and

and breaking the sabbath ; which seem to be totally neglected. The Magistrates are sufficiently alert in apprehending, and bringing to conviction, offenders, upon whose conviction a reward is paid ; but never look towards preventing the commission of any misdemeanor in the people.

The conduct of the Areopagites is worth following : who never concerned themselves in investigating modes of punishing crimes : but were intent in inspiring such a horror and detestation of those crimes ; that no one should dare to commit them. And indeed, preventive justice is on every principle of reason, humanity, and sound policy, preferable in all respects to punishing justice.

That

That the Magistrates neglect their duty in executing the laws, royal proclamation * bears sufficient testimony ; which calls upon them to exert themselves in suppressing vice, profaneness, and immorality. But will the Magistrates obey the royal proclamation, and come to their posts when called ? not, Sir, till they are paid for their time, and labour : and the fifty thousand pounds per annum, or more, expended in orders of removal of the poor, in contesting their settlements, and passing vagrants, would be a sum more than sufficient to pay them.

The Magistrates, being properly ap-

* We have seen the names of many respectable persons to an advertisement publicly declaring their resolutions of assisting, to carry the royal proclamation into effect : but their names will have little weight ; example alone can produce the desired effect.

pointed

pointed and paid, would act conformably to their several appointments to their offices; restore energy in the execution of the laws, and not act like the Roman Magistrate Gallio, who cared for none of those things; as they would be responsible for a neglect of all these things. The Clergy likewise, having decent appointments, need not engage in temporal concerns, so far as to interfere with their duty; their kingdom not being of this world: and being joined with the Magistrates, and concerned in relieving the poor, each in their several stations would co-operate for the general good of the community, by a proper encouragement of industry and sobriety, and to the great diminution of the poor rates.

But as the manners of the people will

E always

always depend in a great measure upon the manners of those placed above them in life, a reformation from the Prince to the subject is wanting : the present age resembling that described by the Bishop of Cloyne ; in which prevailed no reverence for the laws, no attachment to the constitution, little attention to matters of consequence, and great altercation upon trifles ; such idle projects about religion and government, as if the public had both to chuse ; a general contempt of all authority divine and human, and a total indifference about the prevailing opinions, whether they tended to promote order or disorder, the empire of God or the Devil.

See Discourse to Magistrates.

Yet when a reformation will be brought about, neither you, Sir, or I can possibly

possibly tell: but as the laws are wisely framed, and the kingdom is judiciously divided by the Great Alfred into counties, hundreds, and tythings; if Sheriff, Magistrate, and Constable performed their duty, much evil might be prevented: and few could transgress with impunity the bounds of their duty, and the laws of their country. But if the Comes, or Lord Lieutenant of the county, should never exert his authority, except to fill up the commission of the peace; if the Vice Comes or Sheriff should be an officer only to preside at an election, or to meet the Judges upon the road* when they come to hold the assizes; and if Magistrates and Constables should generally be negligent of their

* Unless when the Judges travel post with the King's commission in their pockets.

duty ; what can be expected, but disorder of every kind ?

If you, Sir, should be of opinion, that a repeal of the present poor laws is necessary, you will acknowledge the proposed reformation, in the body of Magistrates and Clergy, would aid the execution of the laws in general ; and that a reformation is absolutely necessary in the body of Magistrates is apparent, when we contemplate in what hands that power is now placed, from the Lord Mayor of London * to the vigilant Justices of Westminster,† and of every city and

* By a proper and regular exertion of his authority the Lord Mayor might have repelled the mob in 1780.

† These Justices take care to pay themselves ; and like rat-catchers, who keep up the breed of vermin, they keep up the breed of vagabonds and rogues, by licensing so many

and borough in the kingdom. And I fear compulsion alone will prevail with the present age, to undertake a very burdensome office; from which undertaking he derives neither honour nor emolument, though he ought to be rewarded with both. For why should not the greatest honours be conferred on those, who are the most useful members of society?

In the year 1575, according to Mr. Hume, Queen Elizabeth complained in parliament of the bad execution of the laws; and threatened, that if the Magistrates were not for the future more vigilant, she would entrust authority to indigent and needy persons, who many ale-houses as they do, in order that they may partake of a reward of forty pounds upon the conviction of those persons, who soon become felons.

would

would find an interest in the more exact distribution of Justice. And it appears that she was as good as her word, for in 1601 there was great complaint made in parliament of the rapine of Justices of the Peace ; and a member observed, that this Magistrate was an animal, who for half a dozen of chickens would dispense with a dozen of penal statutes. It is not easy to account for such relaxation of government, and neglect of police, during a reign of so much vigour, as that of Elizabeth. The small revenue of the crown is the most likely cause, that can be assigned. The Queen had it not in her power to interest a great number, in assisting her to execute the laws.

The people then having proper Magistrates to regulate their conduct, good Pastors to instruct, and lead them in the paths

paths of religion, industry, and sobriety, and good examples in their superiors, to restrain them within the bounds of decency and order, would be attached to those habits of industry and sobriety; by which they are to live, and prosper in life. And there would necessarily follow a material diminution of the present enormous increase of the poor rates, so very burdensome to the public, and of such little benefit to the poor themselves; as may be easily proved by taking a view of the suburbs and cottages in every city, town, and village of this great and flourishing country. For I much doubt, whether more idleness, penury, and filthiness can be found in any part of Europe, than in these districts; not including the state of the chimney sweepers, as represented by that benevolent character the late Mr. Jonas Hanway: and

whether,

whether the condition of our slaves in our West India Islands is not preferable to the present state of our own poor.

These remedies being applied in order to promote the due and proper execution of the laws, I have no doubt that our present laws would want little alteration. For according to the maxim of a French author,

Ce n'est pas assez que d'avoir connû les desordres,

Que d'en avoir imaginé les remèdes ;

Il faut encore veiller à ce que ces remèdes soient appliquées,

Et c'est la partie du problème qui'il semble quo'n ait negligée ;

Cependant sans elle les autres ne sont rien.

And I must here add, that no better remedy can be applied, than to regulate and restrict the number of ale-houses; which I fear can not now be done without

out the assistance of the legislature: though the Gloucestershire Magistrates have published very proper resolutions, and which should have been carried into execution many years past: for whilst government receives so great a revenue, Magistrates profit, and Landlords rent, from ale-houses; little can be done ineffectually suppressing them.*

The preceding letter was suggested by reasons, which must appear sufficiently numerous and cogent to every one; who is acquainted with the state of this country, and feels a serious regard for its wel-

* It is become a common practice with Brewers, to purchase and take leases of tenements in towns, in order to convert them into ale-houses: but I have known a landlord, who would not suffer a tenant to keep an ale-house upon his estate, when there was no want of any for the accommodation of travellers.

fare. By all such the bad police of the metropolis has been long and justly lamented. But was there ever a period, when the streets of this capital so much abounded with vagabonds and beggars, as at present ; when its extensive and increasing suburbs were so shamefully deformed by idleness, poverty, and filth ; when the gaols were so noxiously crowded with felons of every description, notwithstanding the incredible numbers of them, who are ordered and consigned to execution almost at every sessions ? In what former age did public and licensed receptacles of idleness, profligacy, and drunkenness, so disgracefully infest and corrupt every town and village of this country ? Notwithstanding the wisdom of our laws, and the boasted perfection of our constitution ; and notwithstanding the immense and unexampled sums contributed

tributed by the most generous people upon earth for the relief of their poor ; is there a country in Europe, where the persons, the property, I say not moveables, but the houses of the peaceful and industrious subject, are so liable to be violated by the hands of lawless ruffians ? These enormities, which ruin the happiness of individuals, would disgrace the government of any nation whatever : but they are peculiarly disgraceful to the most enlightened, most humane, and in other respects the best governed nation in the world.

In the course of this letter I have pointed out the source, from which they flowed, and which is nothing else, than the negligent or corrupt execution * of

F 2 the

* A person complaining of the disorders, committed by the mob in his present Majesty's reign, to a Judge sitting upon

the laws respecting the morals and manners of the people of England. This most indispensable office, without which all other functions of government are useless or nugatory, the wisdom of our ancestors entrusted to two classes of men; the Magistrates, and the Clergy. But the former of these, not being paid for doing their duty, are too often careless in the performance of it; and the latter, such is the unequal partition of church benefices, being either corrupted by the allurements of wealth and luxury, or degraded by the vices of poverty, meanness, and ignorance, are in both cases alike unqualified for the steady, persevering, and efficacious exertion of that

upon the woolpack, received for answer: we have had, Sir, no police in this country for twenty years past.

censorial

censorial authority, committed to their care and confidence.

Should the proposed alteration be carried into execution, there can be no doubt but that on the best established, clearest principles of political œconomy, the poor rates would be greatly lowered; while the evils resulting from the injudicious and indiscriminate treatment of those, who are poor through necessity, and of those, who are poor through idleness and vice, would be soon greatly mitigated, and in time radically cured.

With respect to the police of this country, the laws are effective; and we should have no reason to complain of the grievances above described, if they were properly executed. The system likewise by the 43d of Elizabeth, with respect

spect to the poor, is competent to answer every good purpose of relieving and employing them: and the farther from which system, says Judge Blackstone, any substituted plan has deviated, the more impracticable and pernicious the visionary attempts of men have proved. All then, that seems necessary to be effected, is to establish well regulated work-houses, as proposed by your bill; and to follow the advice of Dr. Burn, who says, that the best thing, that can be done, is to reform * houses of correction and † work-houses,
in

* In 1775 by a Return made to Parliament it appeared, that only 129l. 19s. 1d. was earned by the labour of 2717 persons; though committed to houses of correction to be employed in hard labour.

† The utility of work-houses has been proved in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk; and let any traveller take a view of the work-house established at Shrewsbury, or at Ghent in Flanders; he will be convinced of the fame

in order to relieve, and at the same time to reform the poor. These work-houses being placed under the constant inspection and direction of Magistrates and officers, who shall be paid for their labour, and punished for their neglect ; if the Clergy would lend their assistance, the work would be compleat. And the Clergy were formerly joined with the Church Wardens and Overseers, in relieving the poor ; it being an ecclesiastical matter and concern.

From the time of Lord Hardwick to the present day the poor laws have received little or no amendment ; though

same utility. And when these work-houses shall be erected, the signs from all unnecessary ale houses should be taken down. But instead of work-houses, a bill is now before parliament, to enable Justices of the peace to licence *Theatrical Representations*, or play-houses.

able

able men have frequently employed themselves in the laudable attempt. But you, Sir, have by indefatigable labour proved the management of the poor to be faulty in the extreme; and the poor rates to be improperly and lavishly expended. And that you may persevere in your endeavours to bring before parliament a real state and account of the public charitable donations, is the hearty wish of one, who thinks you are entitled to the thanks of the public for your past labours, and who with all due respect subscribes himself,

Your Brother Justice.

E R R A T A.

Page 14, line 7, *for their offices read them.*

Page 26, line 14, *for performed read over.*